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SUBJECT: LITHUANIAN MEDIA CONTINUE TO PROBE ALLEGATION OF  
CIA PRISON

REF: A. VILNIUS 549  
B. VILNIUS 487

¶1. SUMMARY: In the aftermath of an October 20 presidential press conference that reopened the question of whether Lithuania hosted a secret CIA prison for terrorist suspects, Lithuanian media continue to report on and investigate the topic. GOL officials have by and large claimed ignorance of the issue, denied the allegations, or declined comment. Media have repeated, but also questioned, information from ABC News concerning flights from Afghanistan to Lithuania, and have said that a building now used by the State Security Department was built several years ago by Americans and could have been the site of a prison. End summary.

¶2. President Dalia Grybauskaite stated on October 20 that she had "indirect suspicions" that reports of a secret CIA prison in Lithuania might be true (ref A); her statement was made in the course of answering a question on whether Lithuania was still considering the acceptance of a Guantanamo detainee. Lithuanian media have covered the story extensively, including doing some investigative reporting. On October 22, LNK TV news identified a complex of buildings about 20 kilometers from Vilnius as a likely site of the alleged prison. The channel's journalists interviewed local residents near the Antaviliai base, which is now used by the State Security Department. The base's neighbors said the buildings on the site were built several years ago by English-speaking American workers and were heavily guarded. Only later was the base turned over to the State Security Department, the neighbors said. Security service officials declined to comment to the TV journalists.

¶3. On October 27, Prime Minister Kubilius, who was not in office when the alleged prison was said to have operated, told a national radio audience that he knew nothing about the alleged CIA prison, and said a parliamentary committee investigating the issue would be able to answer questions once it had completed its probe.

¶4. After ABC News on its website identified several planes that it said had made CIA-chartered flights between Afghanistan and Lithuania, all media repeated that information. But they later also reported the statement by the chairman of the parliamentary committee investigating the alleged prison that those planes or flights did not show up in Lithuania's civil aviation records.

¶5. Former President Valdas Adamkus, who was in office at the time the prison allegedly operated, had earlier denied that any such prison existed. On October 23 he was quoted as saying he had no information about a prison, and that if one had been established without his knowledge, Lithuania should apologize to the world and prosecute those responsible. "If this did actually occur, and is grounded with proof, we have to apologize to the international community that something like this went down in Lithuania, and those who did it without informing the president and other departments, the Seimas (parliament) and the Cabinet -- in my eyes, they are criminals," he said.

¶6. On October 26, LTV televised a discussion of the prison issue, on which Adamkus spoke by phone to the program moderator. She asked him whether he could call former President Bush to ask him about the prison. Adamkus replied that he could, but would not do so. The moderator asked panelists why Lithuania had not sought information about the alleged prison's existence from U.S. officials. The head of the Seimas' National Security and Defense Committee said such requests had been made, but that the United States was following its usual policy of not commenting on intelligence matters. Former Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas then said that "the absence of an answer is also a certain answer."

¶7. The former head of the State Security Department, Arvydas Pocius, speculated in an interview that the reason for putting out information about the alleged CIA prison in Lithuania might have been "to maybe undermine our country's possibilities of participation in international projects, both in NATO and the European Union. I believe this has to do with bad intentions; this does not help the Alliance and the country." He said he did was "very suspicious" about sources used by ABC News in preparing its reports. Pocius, who was head of the Security Department during the time of the alleged prison was said to operate, said he knew nothing about the prison. "I never had such information and do not have any now," he said in an interview carried by several news services. Pocius said he had not been approached by the parliamentary committee investigating the topic.

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